

Tips For Creating Your " TO DO " List

By Joe McHenry

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Most successful people use " TO DO " lists. They range from the top CEOs of multi-national companies to entrepreneurs of small businesses.

Busy housewives and retired workers - anyone who wants to use their limited time effectively.

You can also use these lists to keep you focused on what really needs to be done, and keep you away from un-important tasks that have no value.

The result - more time to do what you want!

1. Make It A Daily Record

Every day you should make a " To Do " list. You will find it invaluable in helping you decide where your priorities lie.

2. The Nuts and Bolts of Your " TO DO " List

Write down all your outstanding tasks on a sheet of paper, then carefully go through deciding if an item is to be graded as :-

- A. Urgent.
- B. Important but not urgent.
- C. Not urgent nor important.

Within categories A and B it will be necessary for you to prioritise so the most urgent task becomes A1, then the next becomes A2 etc.

Similarly with the set of tasks you have decided are B.

This is not necessary with the C tasks of course.

Some people prefer to color code the items instead so with such a system the A tasks may be colored red, the B tasks blue etc.

You may choose whatever colors have meaning for you. It really is an individual choice.

3. Using the " TO DO " List

Each morning you must update your "TO DO" list. Bring forward the A,B,and C items not completed the day before on to another sheet of paper.

Add new items to the lists after considering carefully where each new item should go.

Then review the list and start on the top priorities, crossing off each one as it is finished throughout the day.

Some managers prefer to have separate sheets for each type i.e. one sheet for the "A" list, another sheet for the "B" list etc.

That way you know you are working on the most urgent tasks from the listing itself because the A list should always be on top.

So what do you do with the C items?

If you have staff, then delegate - if not, decide if you are going to complete them or not.

Dispose of all items you decide are not worth doing.

Instead of re-writing your list each morning an alternative method is to spend the last 15 minutes of your day on your list so that you can start immediately the next day.

4. How Pareto's Principle May Help You

Pareto was an Italian economist who observed that 20% of the people in Italy owned 80% of the country's wealth.

This has been found to have real significance and has resulted in the 80/20 Rule.

Broadly speaking 80% of all results come from 20% of all efforts. So identify which 20% is the most important and you can't help but be more successful.

One word of caution - items on the B list which are not completed within a reasonable time scale have a habit of suddenly becoming a major A item!

I have used a "TO DO" list for many,many years and it enabled me to keep on top of my responsibilities and enjoy my family life. I sincerely recommend that you use such a list.

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